



OSTOVĀ

OSTOVĀ (also A/Āstovā; Ostov), a rural district (*rostāq*) of northern Khorasan, considered in medieval Islamic times to be an administrative dependency of Nišāpur. According to Yāqut (*Boldān*, Beirut, I, pp. 175-76), it comprised ninety-three villages. It lay across the road going north from Nišāpur to Nasā on the edge of the steppes. It was in the corridor of Atrak and Kašafud rivers between the present chains of the Kopet Dağ and Kuh-e Hazār Masjed and those of the Kuh-e Šāh Jahān and Kuh-e Binālud. On the headwaters of the Atrak, the average altitude of the area is about 1,300 m. Its chief town was Ẕabušan or Ẕujān, the modern Qučān. Popular etymology interpreted the name Ostovā as meaning “upland plain”; (Le Strange, *Caliphate*, p. 393). It is, in fact, the Astauēnē of the classical Greek sources (Tomaschek).

Islamic geographers like Moqaddasi/Maqdesi (*Aḥsan-al-taqāsim*, pp. 318-19) and the author of the *Ḥodud al-‘ālam* (p. 90, tr. Minorsky, p. 103) expatiate on the fertility of the region, where both dry (*mabāḳes*, *dā’emi*) cultivation and irrigation with *kāriz/qanāt* were practiced. Corn, fruit, and cotton were grown there, and in the medieval period it was characterized as the granary of Nišāpur. Today, the region is an important cereal-growing area of Persia. Sam’āni (*Ketāb al-ansāb*, ed. Yamāni, I, pp. 207-8), followed by Yāqut (*Boldān*, Beirut, I, pp. 175-76), mentions a considerable number of ‘*olamā*’ who came from Ostovā. The name Ostovā seems to have dropped out of everyday usage after the Mongol invasions, Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi (*Nozhat al-qolub*, p. 150, tr. Le Strange, p. 149) states that it was still used in administrative parlance (see, e.g., Jovayni, ed. Qazvini, I, p. 137, II, p. 132, III, pp. 106, 261). For subsequent



history of the district, see Qučān.

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Ebn Ḥawqal, II, p. 433; tr. Kramers and Wiet, II, p. 419.

Ebn Rosta, p. 171, tr. Wiet, p. 199. *Ḥodud al-‘ālam*, p. 49; tr. Minorsky, p. 77. Le Strange, *Caliphate*, pp. 393-94.

Wilhelm Tomaschek, “Astauene,” in Pauly-Wissowa, II/2, col. 1779.

(C. Edmund Bosworth)